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"THE KEY TO CASTLE GRAYSKULL!"
MASTERS
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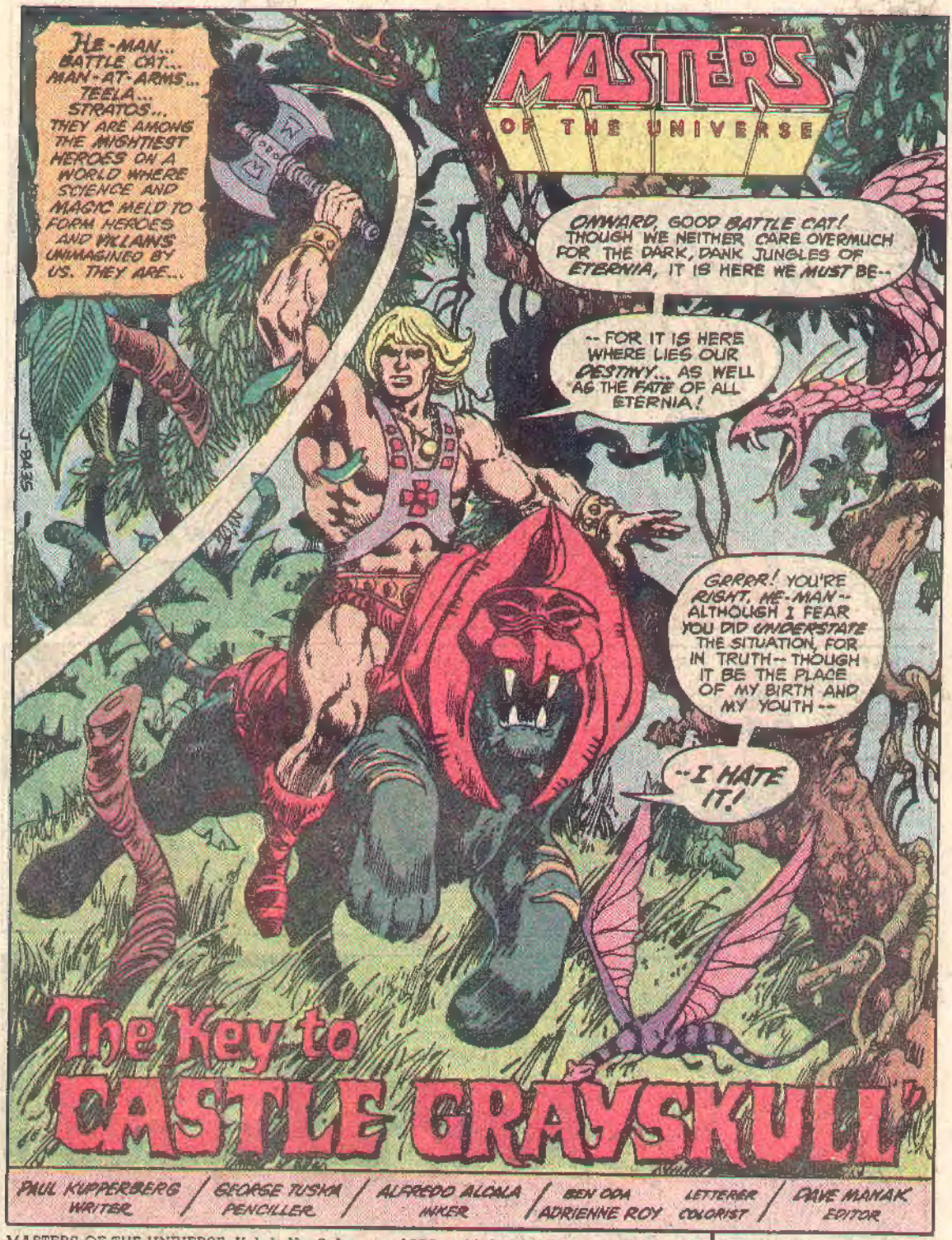
WHERE THE ACTION IS!


HE-MAN... BATTLE CAT... MAN-AT-ARMS... TEELA... STRATOS... THEY ARE AMONG THE MIGHTIEST HEROES ON A WORLD WHERE SCIENCE AND MAGIC MELD TO FORM HEROES AND VILLAINS UNIMAGINED BY US. THEY ARE...
MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE
ONWARD, GOOD BATTLE CAT! THOUGH WE NEITHER CARE OVERMUCH FOR THE DARK, DANK JUNGLES OF ETERNIA, IT IS HERE WE MUST BE--
-- FOR IT IS HERE WHERE LIES OUR DESTINY... AS WELL AS THE FATE OF ALL ETERNIA!
GRRRR! YOU'RE RIGHT, HE-MAN -- ALTHOUGH I FEAR YOU DID UNDERSTATE THE SITUATION, FOR IN TRUTH -- THOUGH IT BE THE PLACE OF MY BIRTH AND MY YOUTH --
--I HATE IT!
J-8435
The Key to CASTLE GRAYSKULL
PAUL KUPPERBERG WRITER / GEORGE TUSKA PENCILLER / ALFREDO ALCALA INKER / BEN ODA ADRIENNE ROY LETTERER COLORIST / DAVE MANAK EDITOR

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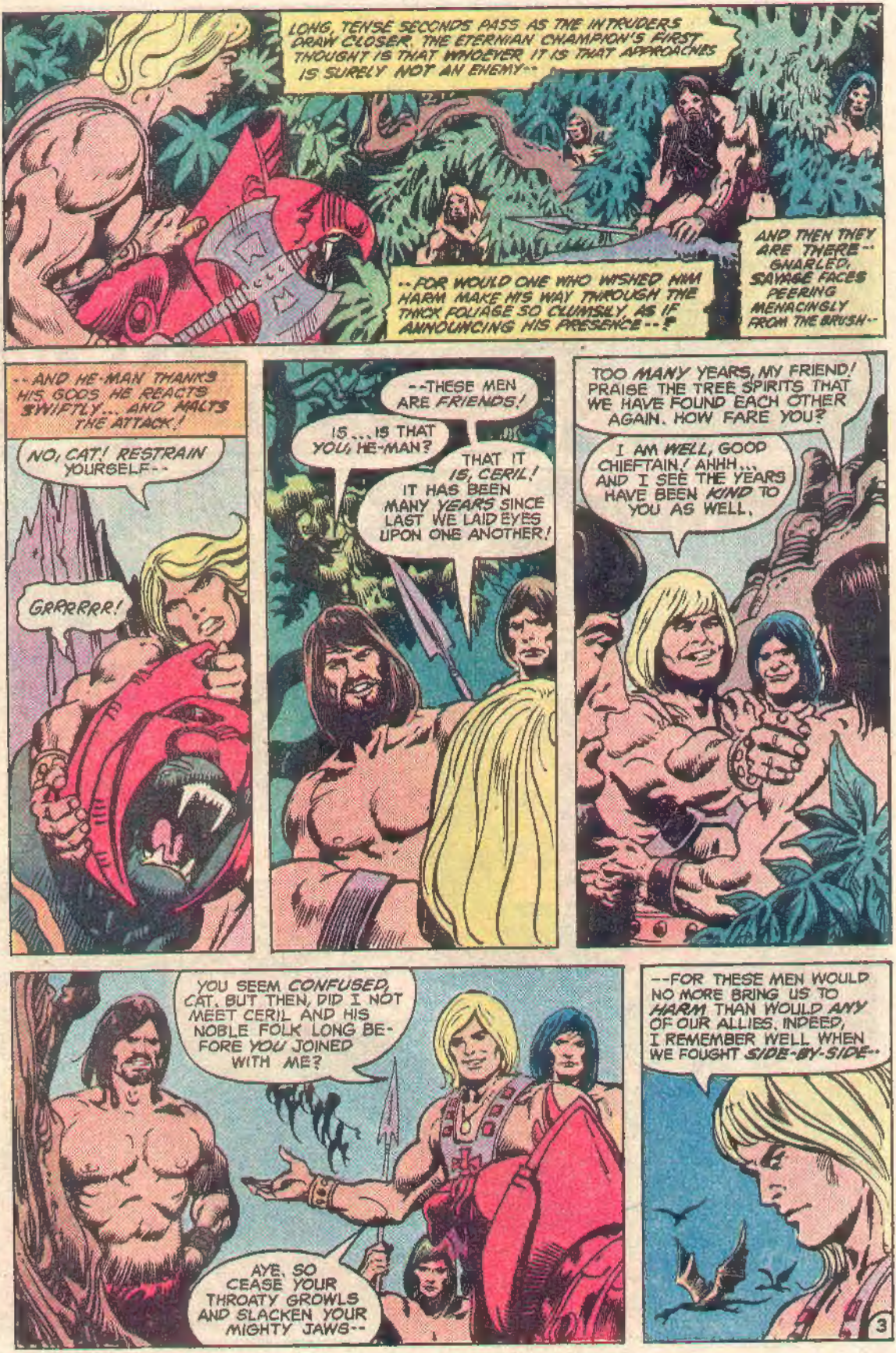
I LIKE NOT THIS WHOLE MISSION, OLD FRIEND. TRULY DOES IT RILE ME TO BE IN THE SERVICE OF MY ENEMY-- SKELETOR!
AYE--BUT THEN, WHAT CHOICE HAD WE? THAT EVIL DEMON MADE HIS DEMANDS ALL TOO CLEAR.
THAT HE DID. I RUE THE DAY HE WAS ABLE TO ABDUCT THE GODDESS FROM HER CAVERN, KNOWING THAT I WOULD DO HIS BIDDING WHILE HE HELD SWAY OVER HER VERY EXISTENCE!
FOR THOUGH HIS PRICE FOR THE LIFE OF THE GODDESS IS THE TWIN HALVES OF THE AWESOME POWER SWORD... THAT WHICH WILL GRANT ETERNIA'S SWORN FOE ACCESS TO THE CASTLE GRAYSKULL--
--STILL MUST I DO AS HE COMMANDS, FOR ONLY THE OTHER GODS COULD KNOW WHAT THE DEATH OF A GODDESS MIGHT MEAN TO THE WORLD ...OR THE COSMOS!
SO WE MUST OBEY SKELETOR --FOR NOW! BUT...WOULD NOT THAT BE SIMPLER, HE-MAN, IF WE KNEW WHERE WE WERE GOING?!
PATIENCE, NOBLE CAT. YOU KNOW FULL WELL THAT WE SEEK OUT THE MAGICAL TALISMANS WHICH WILL LEAD, ULTIMATELY, TO THE SWORDS--
--AND, AS MY FATHER'S COURT SORCERER DID EXPLAIN, THIS CHARM WILL SHOW US WHICH WAY TO GO--
--WHEN IT DOES--GLOW!
BY THE FATES, CAT! WE DRAW EVER NEARER TO OUR GOAL, LET US NOT WASTE TIME-- COME! THE CHARM POINTS YONDER...!
HOLD, MY PRINCE! GO NO FURTHER. MY EARS DO DETECT NOISE AND MY NOSE SNIFFS DANGER IN THE BRUSH--
--THERE ARE MEN APPROACHING!
AYE? WELL, LET THEM COME--I AM, AS EVER, READY TO DO BATTLE!
2


LONG, TENSE SECONDS PASS AS THE INTRUDERS DRAW CLOSER. THE ETERNIAN CHAMPION'S FIRST THOUGHT IS THAT WHOEVER IT IS THAT APPROACHES IS SURELY NOT AN ENEMY--
--FOR WOULD ONE WHO WISHED HIM HARM MAKE HIS WAY THROUGH THE THICK FOLIAGE SO CLUMSILY, AS IF ANNOUNCING HIS PRESENCE--?
AND THEN THEY ARE THERE-- SNARLED, SAVAGE FACES PEERING MENACINGLY FROM THE BRUSH--
--AND HE-MAN THANKS HIS GODS HE REACTS SWIFTLY... AND HALTS THE ATTACK!
NO, CAT! RESTRAIN YOURSELF--
GRRRRR!
--THESE MEN ARE FRIENDS!
IS... IS THAT YOU, HE-MAN?
THAT IT IS, CERIL! IT HAS BEEN MANY YEARS SINCE LAST WE LAID EYES UPON ONE ANOTHER!
TOO MANY YEARS, MY FRIEND! PRAISE THE TREE SPIRITS THAT WE HAVE FOUND EACH OTHER AGAIN. HOW FARE YOU?
I AM WELL, GOOD CHIEFTAIN! AHHH... AND I SEE THE YEARS HAVE BEEN KIND TO YOU AS WELL.
YOU SEEM CONFUSED, CAT. BUT THEN, DID I NOT MEET CERIL AND HIS NOBLE FOLK LONG BEFORE YOU JOINED WITH ME?
AYE. SO CEASE YOUR THROATY GROWLS AND SLACKEN YOUR MIGHTY JAWS--
--FOR THESE MEN WOULD NO MORE BRING US TO HARM THAN WOULD ANY OF OUR ALLIES. INDEED, I REMEMBER WELL WHEN WE FOUGHT SIDE-BY-SIDE--
3

"--THAT DAY, WHEN AS PRINCE ADAM, I VENTURED ALONE INTO THE DENSE FORESTS OF ETERNIA, SEEKING TO DO NOTHING BUT HUNT... AND BE ALONE WITH MY THOUGHTS.
"AND BEFORE MUCH TIME HAD PASSED, I DID FIND A PREY OF A MUCH DIFFERENT NATURE THAN WHAT I HAD COME FOR!
"HIS NAME WAS DAMON, A SORCERER WHO, TILL THIS TIME, WAS CONTENT TO LURK WITHIN HIS LAIR AND PLAY HIS GAMES WITH COSMIC PLACES FAR FROM HERE!
"YET, NOW DID DAMON CHOOSE TO COME FORTH, ENSLAVING THE GOOD PEOPLE OF CERIL'S TRANQUIL VILLAGE TO DO HIS EVIL WILL.
"ERE I COULD MOVE, DAMON'S SORCEROUS SENSES DID DETECT MY PRESENCE AND THE DEMON LASHED OUT AT ME WITH HIS DEMONIC MIGHT.
"'TWAS ONLY THROUGH MY SWIFT ACTIONS THAT SAVED ME FROM HIS SPELL--
"--AND THEN WAS I JOINED IN THE FRAY BY THE MYSTERIOUS FALCON... A WINGED WARRIOR WHO IS THE MESSENGER OF OUR GODDESS. THE FALCON DID BUT APPEAR--
"--AND GONE WAS PRINCE ADAM, REPLACED BY THE FORM OF... HE-MAN. THUS HAD BEEN THE FALCON SENT, TO SEE THAT I WOULD NOT FACE DAMON WITHOUT MIGHT OF MY OWN--
"--THE SKILLS AND POWERS WHICH I HAVE PERFECTED THROUGH MY LONG AND WILLING SERVICE TO HER.
"SO WAS DAMON DEFEATED THAT DAY--
"--FOR OUR GODDESS DOES PROTECT ETERNIA--BE IT BY HER OWN HAND OR THE HANDS OF THOSE WHO FOLLOW HER. THIS VILLAGE WAS SAVED AND ITS INHABITANTS MADE FRIENDS AND ALLIES.
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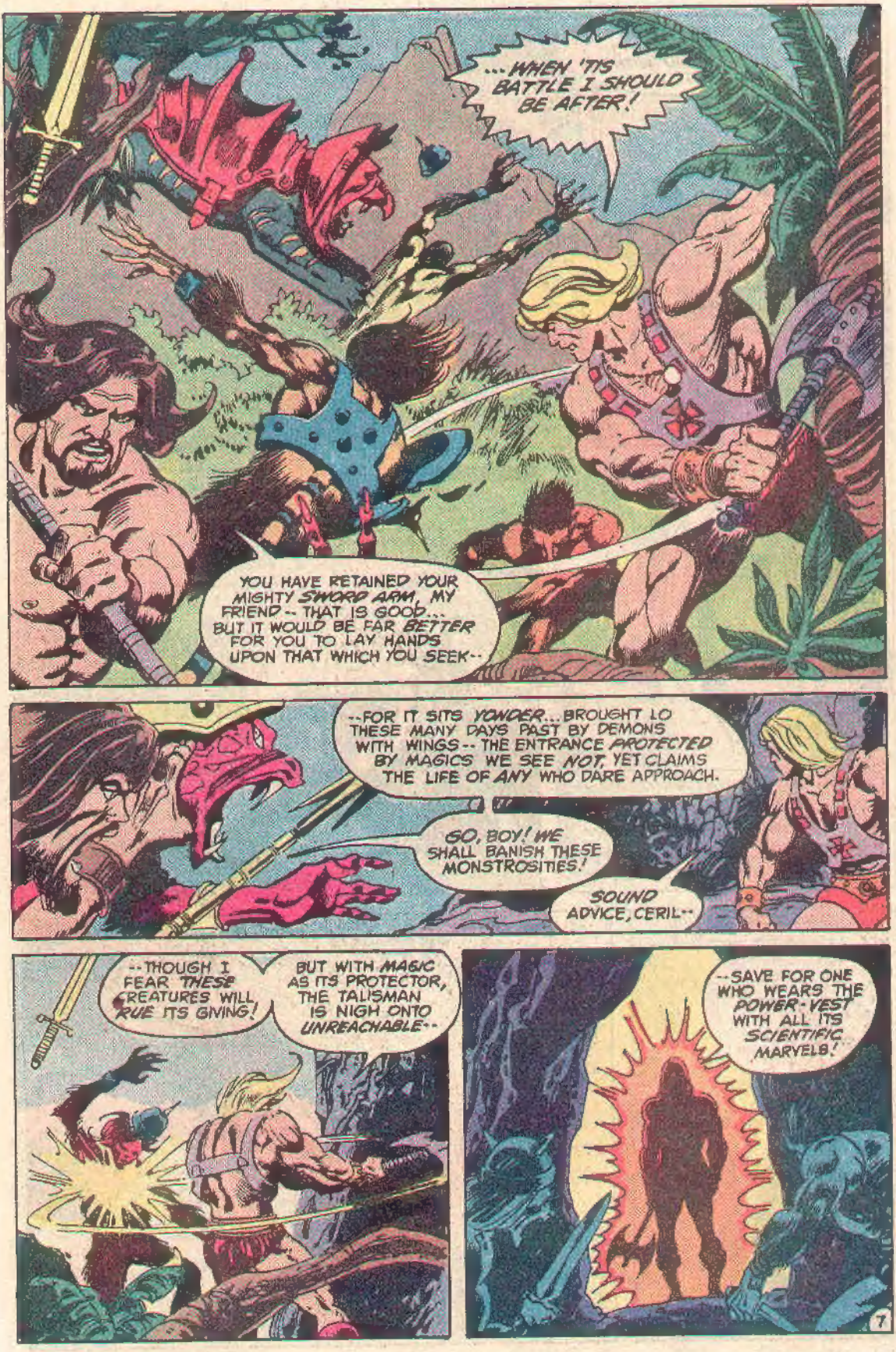
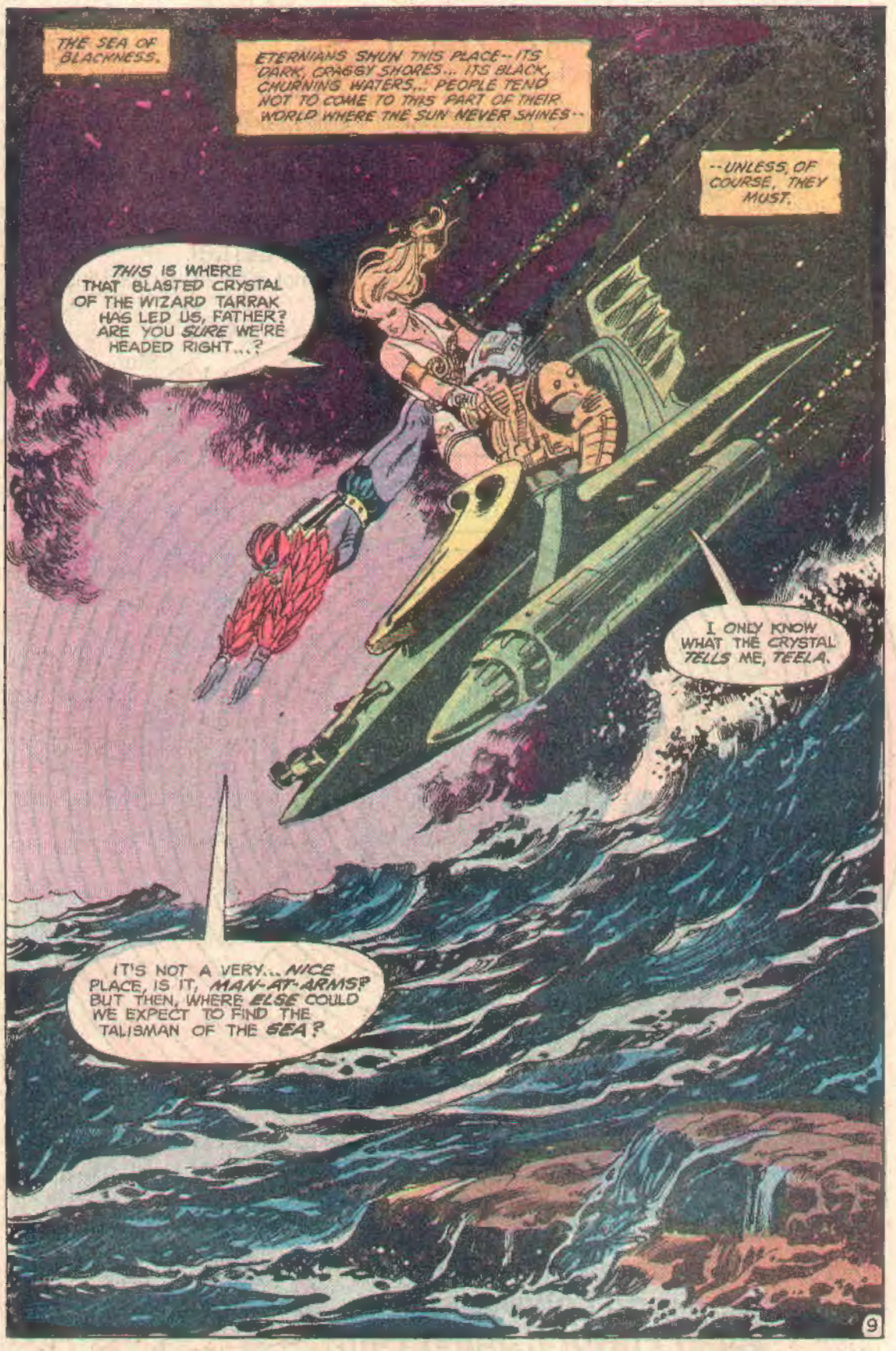
CONTINUED ON 35TH PAGE FOLLOWING

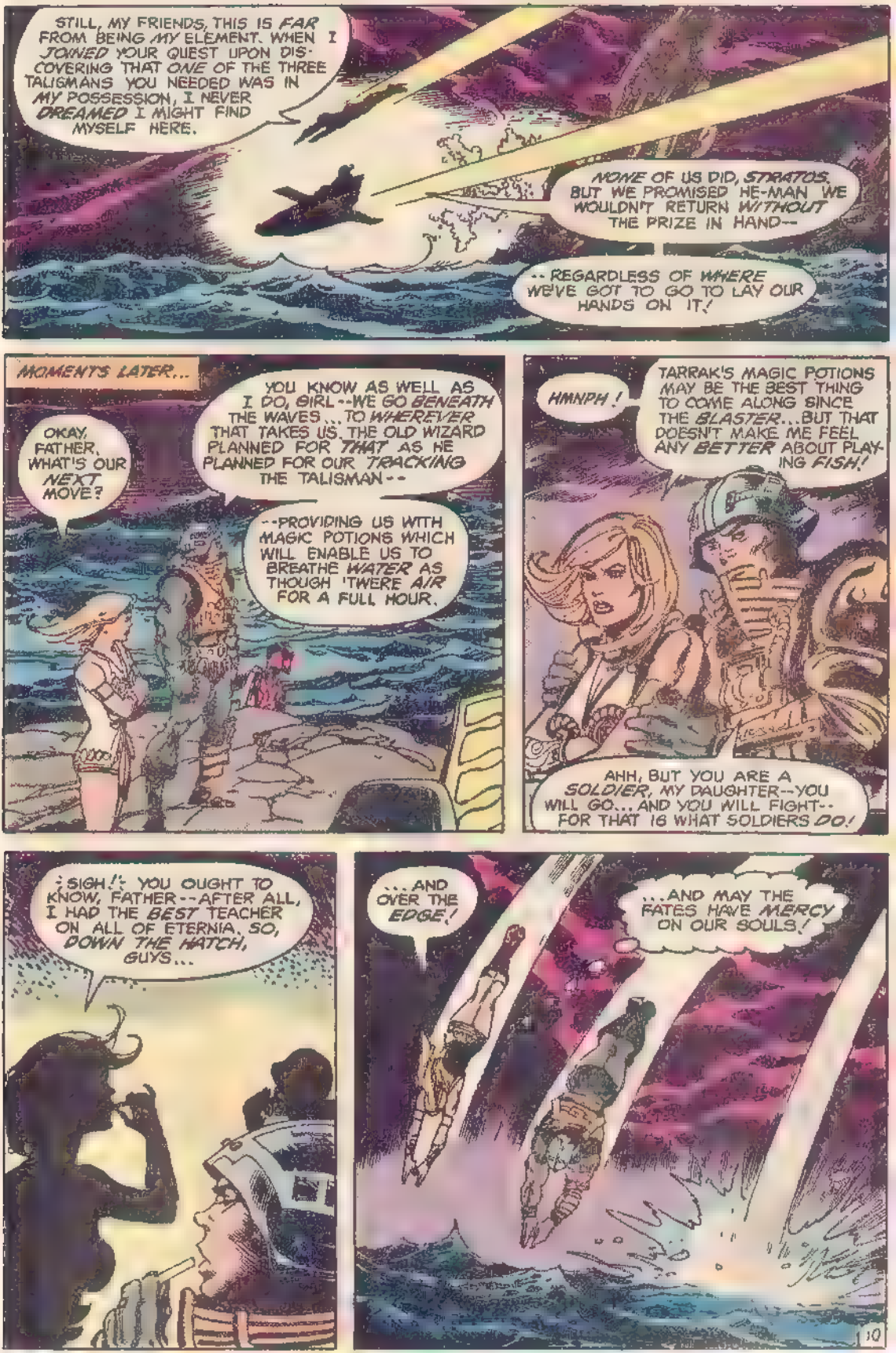
"SO IT HAS BEEN THAT SINCE THAT DAY, CERIL AND HIS PEOPLE HAVE BEEN UNITED UNDER MY FATHER THE KING'S BANNER... LOYAL TO HIS RULE AND CROWN."
'TIS UPON A MISSION FOR THE KING THAT YOU COME THEN, HE-MAN? YOU KNOW WELL WE STAND READY TO OBEY--!
IT IS HARDLY THE KING WHO HAS SENT US, CERIL,' BUT WE ARE ON A MISSION NONETHELESS -- A QUEST FOR A TALISMAN... IN THE SHAPE OF A STAR UPON THE HEAVENS!
AHH, THEN I PRAY 'TWAS NOT YOUR HOPE FOR A LONG QUEST, WARRIOR, ELSE YOUR JOY AT THIS MEETING WILL TURN QUICKLY TO DISAPPOINTMENT. I HAVE SEEN YOUR TALISMAN, HE-MAN-- NOT MOMENTS FROM THIS PLACE!
YOU ARE CERTAIN, CERIL?
NEED YOU EVEN ASK? MY EYES MAY NOT BE AS YOUNG AS YOURS, BUT I CAN STILL GIVE THE FALCON, ZOAR A MARK IN SPOTTING! COME!
HIS HEART RACES IN HIS BREAST EVEN AS THE ELDRITCH CRYSTAL HE WEARS OVER IT PULSATES WITH MYSTIC LIGHT. HERE HE WILL FIND HIS GOAL--
--UNLESS, OF COURSE, THE GODS SEE FIT TO END HIS LIFE 'ERE HE EVER SETS EYES UPON IT!
AIIIII! WHAT MANNER OF SORCERY BE THIS--?!
SORCERY MOST FOUL, MY FRIEND! SHIELD YOURSELVES!
MAGIC, BAH... RATHER WOULD BATTLE CAT BE PRESENTED WITH A PHYSICAL FOE TO SINK TOOTH AND CLAW INTO!
5

DOES THIS FILL YOUR BILL, CAT? ARE THESE DEMONS SOLID ENOUGH TO SATISFY YOUR LUST FOR BATTLE?
THEY WILL DO.
YET I AM SURE THESE CREATURES FROM HELL WERE NOT SENT PURELY TO PROVIDE YOU WITH PLAYMATES. ONCE AGAIN DOES SOMEONE SEEK TO BLOCK OUR WAY TO THE TALISMANS!
THIS REEKS OF THE WORK OF EVIL SKELETOR--YET SUCH ACTIONS COULD ONLY PROVE CONTRARY TO HIS OFT STATED GOALS, BUT WHO, THEN, CAN BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THESE EVENTS--?
TCHONK!
BAH! AS USUAL, I THINK TOO MUCH--
6


...WHEN 'TIS BATTLE I SHOULD BE AFTER!
YOU HAVE RETAINED YOUR MIGHTY SWORD ARM, MY FRIEND -- THAT IS GOOD... BUT IT WOULD BE FAR BETTER FOR YOU TO LAY HANDS UPON THAT WHICH YOU SEEK--
--FOR IT SITS YONDER... BROUGHT TO THESE MANY DAYS PAST BY DEMONS WITH WINGS -- THE ENTRANCE PROTECTED BY MAGICS WE SEE NOT, YET CLAIMS THE LIFE OF ANY WHO DARE APPROACH.
GO, BOY! WE SHALL BANISH THESE MONSTROSITIES!
SOUND ADVICE, CERIL--
--THOUGH I FEAR THESE CREATURES WILL RUE ITS GIVING!
BUT WITH MAGIC AS ITS PROTECTOR, THE TALISMAN IS NIGH ONTO UNREACHABLE--
--SAVE FOR ONE WHO WEARS THE POWER-VEST WITH ALL ITS SCIENTIFIC MARVELS!
7

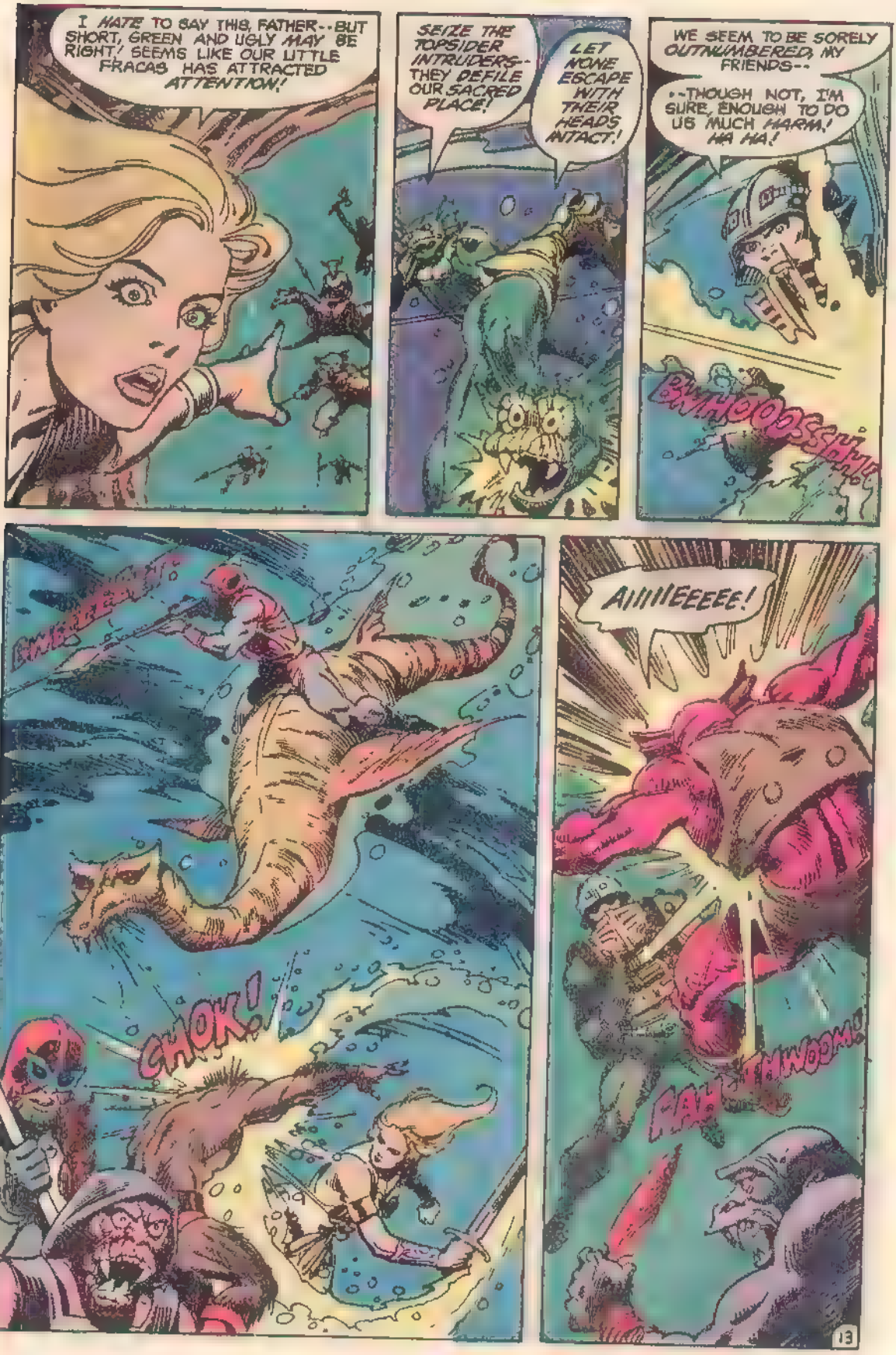
AND THANK THE STARS I HAVE IT, EH? THIS MAGICAL FIELD IS POWERFUL INDEED, AND WITHOUT THE YEST--
ZZZZZZZZZZT
--I MIGHT WIND UP AS DESTROYED BY ITS MIGHT AS YOU WRETCHED BEASTS!
IT IS DARK AND SILENT WITHIN THE CAVERN, THE FURIOUS DIN OF BATTLE LOST BEYOND THE MAGIC BARRIER--
--BUT THERE IS ONE POINT OF LIGHT TO GUIDE THE WARRIOR TO THE CENTER--
--ONE POINT OF UTTER BRILLIANCE ...YET IS EVEN THIS LIGHT THE THING ONE WOULD EXPECT THE VERY FATE OF A WORLD TO REST ON?
HE-MAN DOES NOT STOP TO PONDER THIS--
--FOR IN THE NEXT INSTANT...
HAVEN'T YOU GOT IT YET, HE-MAN?! THE MAGICAL BARRIER'S VANISHED FROM THE CAVE'S ENTRANCE..,THE DEMONS ARE DIRECTLY BEHIND ME...
FORGIVE ME, CAT--
--I SHOULD NOT HAVE DELAYED, BUT FEAR NOT--
--I HAVE IT NOW...?! BY THE GODS ...CAT-- WE... WE DISAPPEA...
AS IF THEY WERE NEVER THERE, HE-MAN AND BATTLE CAT ARE GONE FROM THE CAVERN -- AND IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE, THEIR SUPERNATURALLY CREATED FOES VANISH AS WELL.
8


THE SEA OF BLACKNESS.
ETERNIANS SHUN THIS PLACE--ITS DARK, CRAGGY SHORES... ITS BLACK, CHURNING WATERS... PEOPLE TEND NOT TO COME TO THIS PART OF THEIR WORLD WHERE THE SUN NEVER SHINES--
--UNLESS, OF COURSE, THEY MUST.
THIS IS WHERE THAT BLASTED CRYSTAL OF THE WIZARD TARRAK HAS LED US, FATHER? ARE YOU SURE WE'RE HEADED RIGHT...?
I ONLY KNOW WHAT THE CRYSTAL TELLS ME, TEELA.
IT'S NOT A VERY... NICE PLACE, IS IT, MAN-AT-ARMS? BUT THEN, WHERE ELSE COULD WE EXPECT TO FIND THE TALISMAN OF THE SEA?


STILL, MY FRIENDS, THIS IS FAR FROM BEING MY ELEMENT. WHEN I JOINED YOUR QUEST UPON DISCOVERING THAT ONE OF THE THREE TALISMANS YOU NEEDED WAS IN MY POSSESSION, I NEVER DREAMED I MIGHT FIND MYSELF HERE.
NONE OF US DID, STRATOS. BUT WE PROMISED HE-MAN WE WOULDN'T RETURN WITHOUT THE PRIZE IN HAND--
--REGARDLESS OF WHERE WE'VE GOT TO GO TO LAY OUR HANDS ON IT!
MOMENTS LATER...
OKAY, FATHER, WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?
YOU KNOW AS WELL AS I DO, GIRL--WE GO BENEATH THE WAVES...TO WHEREVER THAT TAKES US. THE OLD WIZARD PLANNED FOR THAT AS HE PLANNED FOR OUR TRACKING THE TALISMAN--
--PROVIDING US WITH MAGIC POTIONS WHICH WILL ENABLE US TO BREATHE WATER AS THOUGH 'TWERE AIR FOR A FULL HOUR.
HMNPH!
TARRAK'S MAGIC POTIONS MAY BE THE BEST THING TO COME ALONG SINCE THE BLASTER...BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE ME FEEL ANY BETTER ABOUT PLAYING FISH!
AHH, BUT YOU ARE A SOLDIER, MY DAUGHTER--YOU WILL GO...AND YOU WILL FIGHT--FOR THAT IS WHAT SOLDIERS DO!
SIGH!- YOU OUGHT TO KNOW, FATHER--AFTER ALL, I HAD THE BEST TEACHER ON ALL OF ETERNIA. SO, DOWN THE HATCH, GUYS...
...AND OVER THE EDGE!
...AND MAY THE FATES HAVE MERCY ON OUR SOULS!

IT DOES NOT SEEM POSSIBLE YET THE WATERS BENEATH THE TURBULENT SURFACE OF THE SEA OF BLACKNESS ARE DARKER STILL, WITH A FOULNESS TO THEM THAT MAKES THE SUSTAINING OF LIFE APPEAR IMPOSSIBLE.
THEN THIS TRIO REACHES THE OCEAN FLOOR... AND THERE IS, AGAINST ALL ODDS, LIGHT. A GLOWING GREEN LUMINESCENCE AS IF THE SUN HAD COME ALIVE HERE
AND EVEN MORE INCREDIBLE, THERE IS LIFE--!
A... A CITY, FATHER? HOW CAN THAT BE?
IT IS THE HOME OF THE MER-PEOPLE, TEELA--AND THE RESTING PLACE OF THAT WHICH WE SEEK IF THIS CRYSTAL IS TO BE BELIEVED.
WE'VE NO CHOICE BUT TO BELIEVE IT, MAN-AT-ARMS. STILL, WE'RE LUCKY THAT WE'VE HAPPENED UPON THE CITY WHILE ITS RESIDENTS SLEEP!
AYE--BUT WE DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER THAT WILL LAST. I SUGGEST WE MAKE AS MUCH HASTE AS WE CAN MUSTER. NOT ONLY DON'T WE WANT TO MEET THE MER-PEOPLE--
BUT THE POTION THAT ALLOWS US TO BREATHE HERE WILL NOT LAST MUCH LONGER!
THIS WAY-- THE CRYSTAL'S GLOW IS NEARLY BLINDING!
BY MY RECKONING, WE'VE BARELY ENOUGH TIME TO LOCATE THE TALISMAN, RETRIEVE IT AND MAKE OUR WAY BACK TO THE SURFACE.
I THINK WE'VE MANAGED THE FIRST PART OF THAT, FATHER... LOOK! THAT APPEARS TO BE SOME MANNER OF TEMPLE-- JUST THE PLACE TO KEEP AN ICON LIKE THE FISH TALISMAN!
11

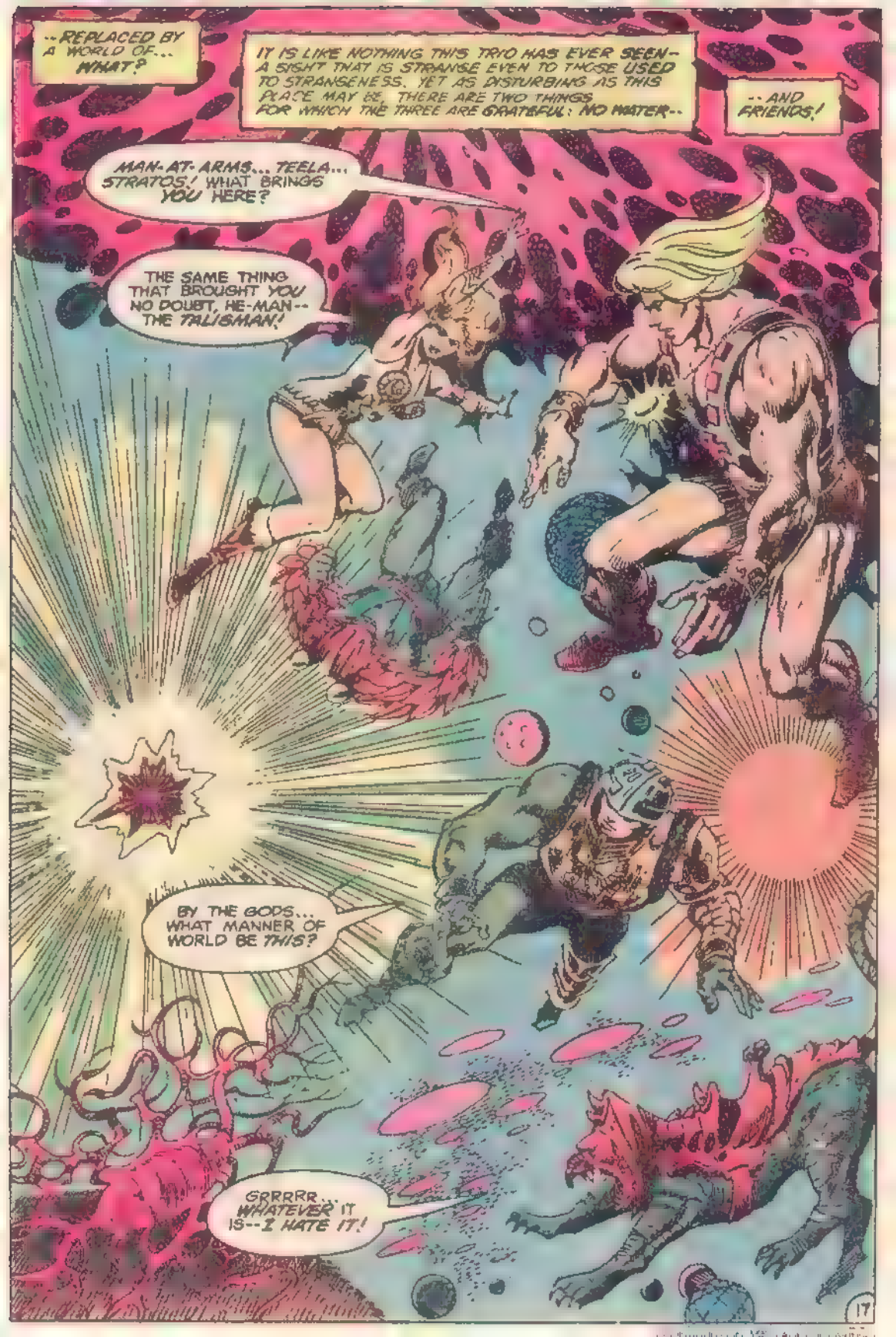
UHH--PERHAPS THAT WON'T BE AS EASY AS IT SOUNDS, DAUGHTER. IT SEEMS WE ARE NOT ALONE AFTER ALL!--MER-MAN!
MAN-AT-ARMS... AND STRATOS! BY SERPOS--WHAT BRINGS MY LORD SKELETOR'S BITTEREST FOES TO MY OWN HOME--AS IF I DID NOT KNOW!
THEN MOVE ASIDE, SEA BEAST--FOR DISTASTEFUL THOUGH IT MIGHT BE, OUR MISSION IS IN THE NAME OF SKELETOR... YOUR MASTER.
BAH! MY MASTER NO MORE, FOOLISH BIRD-MAN! NO SOONER HAD I HEARD FOUL SKELETOR'S PLANS THAN I KNEW WHERE I MIGHT FIND THE TALISMAN--
--SO THAT I MAY LOCATE FIRST THE TWIN HALVES OF THE POWER SWORD AND MAKE MYSELF RULER OVER ALL OF ETERNIA... AND THEN DEAL WITH SKELETOR MYSELF!
AFTER ALL, ETERNIA IS THE WORLD OF MY BIRTH, WHILE SKELETOR IS BUT AN INTERLOPER FROM THE VARIED PLAINS OF THE MULTIVERSE! WHO DESERVES TO RULE MORE, I ASK YOU?
FWHOOOSSH!
IF THE TRUTH BE KNOWN, SEA-MAN... NEITHER! BUT SKELETOR HOLDS THE GODDESS RAAKSOM FOR OUR SERVICES--
--WHILE YOU--
EH--?!
--ARE BUT A MOMENTARY HINDRANCE TO OUR SAVING HER!
VRAK!
AWAY FROM ME, OLD MAN! THERE IS NOTHING THAT WILL STAND IN THE WAY OF MY DESIRES--NOT YOU... NOT EVEN MIGHTY SKELETOR!
12


I HATE TO SAY THIS, FATHER--BUT SHORT, GREEN AND UGLY MAY BE RIGHT/ SEEMS LIKE OUR LITTLE FRACAS HAS ATTRACTED ATTENTION!
SEIZE THE TOPSIDER INTRUDERS-- THEY DEFILE OUR SACRED PLACE!
LET NONE ESCAPE WITH THEIR HEADS INTACT!
WE SEEM TO BE SORELY OUTNUMBERED, MY FRIENDS--
--THOUGH NOT, I'M SURE, ENOUGH TO DO US MUCH HARM! HA HA!
BWHOOOSSHH!
CHOK!
AIIIIEEEEE!
KAH-THWOOM!
13

MAYBE NOT, FATHER--BUT REGARDLESS OF OUR SUPERIOR SKILLS AS WARRIORS, THESE GILLED UGLIES STILL HOLD AN ADVANTAGE OVER US THAT CAN'T BE ARMORED--
--NAMELY THEY LIVE UNDERWATER, WHILE WE'RE JUST VISITORS... AND VERY TEMPORARY ONES AT THAT!
HAVE YOU ANY IDEA HOW MUCH LONGER TARRAK'S BREATHING POTION IS GOING TO LAST?
AN EXCELLENT POINT, TEELA! THEN LET US NOT WASTE THOSE PRECIOUS MOMENTS BATTLING THESE CREATURES--WE MUST FIND THE TALISMAN AND BE ON OUR WAY!
HA HA HA! DREAM ON, SURFACE DWELLER! AS LONG AS I COMMAND MY PEOPLE'S LOYALTY, YOU SHALL HAVE NO RESPITE FROM BATTLE--UNTIL YOUR LUNGS FILL WITH WATER AND YOU GO TO JOIN YOUR GODS! HA HA HA!
I SAY THEE NAY, MER-MAN! IT WILL NOT BE THE HUMANS WHO THIS DAY FACE THEIR GODS ABOVE. THOUGH THE SAME TRUTH CAN NOT BE SPOKEN FOR YOU!
SERPOS, HAVE MERCY! T-THAT VOICE... I KNOW IT WELL--!
AS YOU SHOULD, LACKEY--FOR IT IS THE VOICE OF YOUR MASTER... HE YOU DID SEEK TO CHEAT OF WHAT IS RIGHTFULLY HIS! DID YOU THINK I WAS UNAWARE OF YOUR TREACHERY, FOOL--
--DO YOU BELIEVE SKELETOR WOULD NOT KNOW ALL THAT CONCERNS HIS INTERESTS?
P-PLEASE, MASTER-- HAVE MERCY ON ME! I MERELY SOUGHT TO ..TO...

SILENCE, WRETCH! SKELETOR WILL HEAR NO EXCUSES FROM YOU!
DO.. DO NOT SLAY ME, MASTER! I BEG OF YOU THAT COURTESY FOR ALL MY YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE!
HA HA HA! SLAY YOU, MER-MAN AHH YOU WILL NOT BE THAT LUCKY!
AND YOU, THE PEOPLE OF THIS SEA KINGDOM-- I SAY TO THEE, LEAVE THE HUMANS BE! THEY ARE UNDER MY PROTECTION. TO HARM THEM IS TO RISK THE WRATH OF SKELETOR!
HOLD, SKELETOR! WE MAY HAVE TO DO YOUR DIRTY WORK LOCATING THE POWER SWORDS, BUT WE'LL NOT BE DEBASED FURTHER BY ALLYING WITH YOU AGAINST ANY FOE!
YOU'LL GET YOUR SWORD- BUT ON OUR TERMS.
HA HA, SUCH COURAGE FROM ONE SO LOVELY. SO BE IT, WOMAN--
-I DO WITHDRAW MY PROTECTION, FIGHT--AND DIE-- AS YOU WILL, ALL I DEMAND IS THAT 'ERE YOU DO SO, THE SWORD BE IN MY POSSESSION COME NOW MER-MAN DAMNATION AWAITS YOU!
POOF!
PUFF!
THE MER PEOPLE ARE YET TOO STUNNED BY SKELETOR'S APPEARANCE TO NOTICE MY MAKING FOR THE ALTAR. I NEED BUT A SECOND--
--AND IT SHALL BE OURS! TO MY SIDE, COMRADES PREPARE TO BE ON OUR WAY
NOW THAT IS A PRETTY THOUGHT IF EVER I HEARD ONE, STRATOS, YET HOW DO YOU PLAN TO GET THE MER-PEOPLE TO GO ALONG WITH IT?
WITH OUR SWORDS, FATHER... HOW ELSE?
15

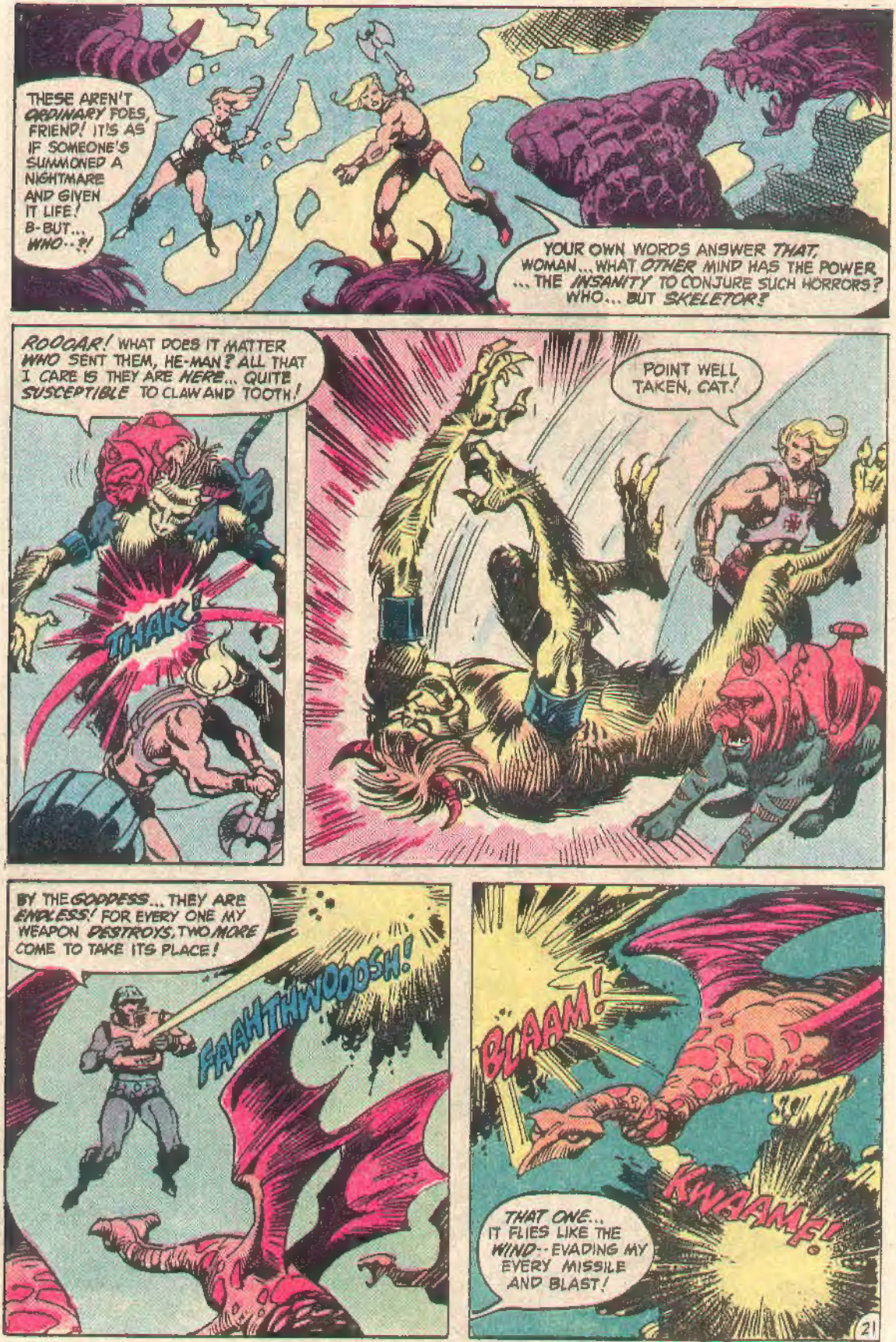
-GASP!-
TIME MAY...WELL DO THE MER MEN'S JOB FOR THEM... M-MY FRIENDS. -GASP!- ALL READY... I-I FIND I...CANNOT ...-GASP!-
KRAKLE!
T-THERE--! I...-GASP!... H-HAVE FOUND IT!
L-LITTLE GOOD THAT ...-GASP!- ...DOES US N-NOW... STRATOS--! I TOO...AM FINDING... BREATHING A-A CHORE...!
CRY KEPT!
H-HOLD ON, FATHER! I... -GASP!- ...WILL SAVE Y-YOU!
AND NOW MIGHT...YOU D-DO THAT, GIRL...WHEN YOU...-GASP!-... YOURSELF COULD USE S-SALVATION...?
THEY ARE DONE! QUICKLY NOW, MY BROTHERS--RUN THEM THROUGH WHERE THEY STAND!
S-SO... CLOSE... -GASP!- ...ANOTHER MOMENT... AND... AND...
...I WOULD HAVE... IT...
FINGERS TOUCH WARMLY GLOWING METAL--
-- AND SUDDENLY THE WORLD OF WATER IS GONE--
16

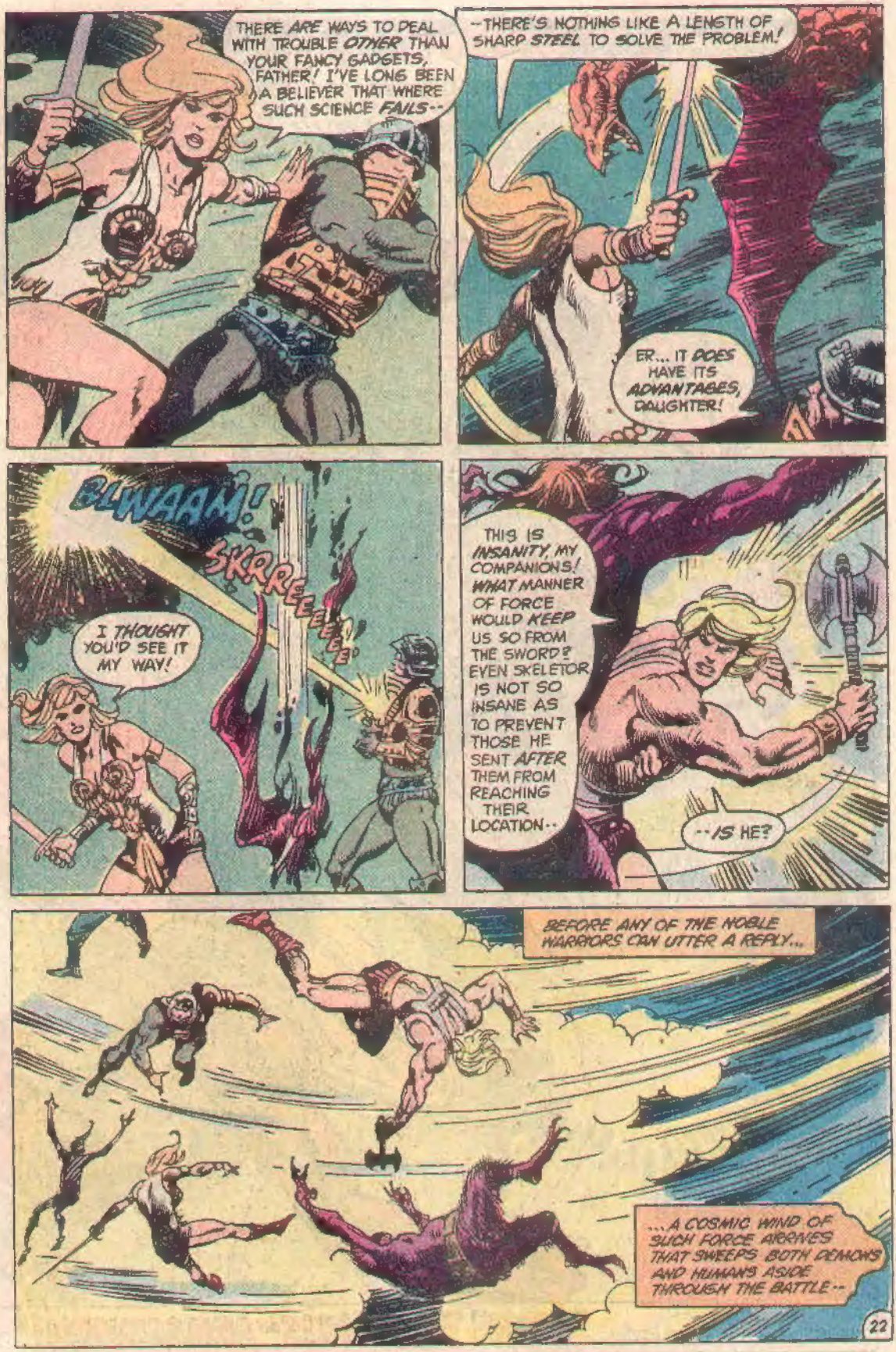

--REPLACED BY A WORLD OF... WHAT?
IT IS LIKE NOTHING THIS TRIO HAS EVER SEEN-- A SIGHT THAT IS STRANGE EVEN TO THOSE USED TO STRANGENESS. YET AS DISTURBING AS THIS PLACE MAY BE, THERE ARE TWO THINGS FOR WHICH THE THREE ARE GRATEFUL: NO MATER--
--AND FRIENDS!
MAN-AT-ARMS... TEELA... STRATOS! WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?
THE SAME THING THAT BROUGHT YOU NO DOUBT, HE-MAN-- THE TALISMAN!
BY THE GODS... WHAT MANNER OF WORLD BE THIS?
GRRRRR... WHATEVER IT IS--I HATE IT!
17

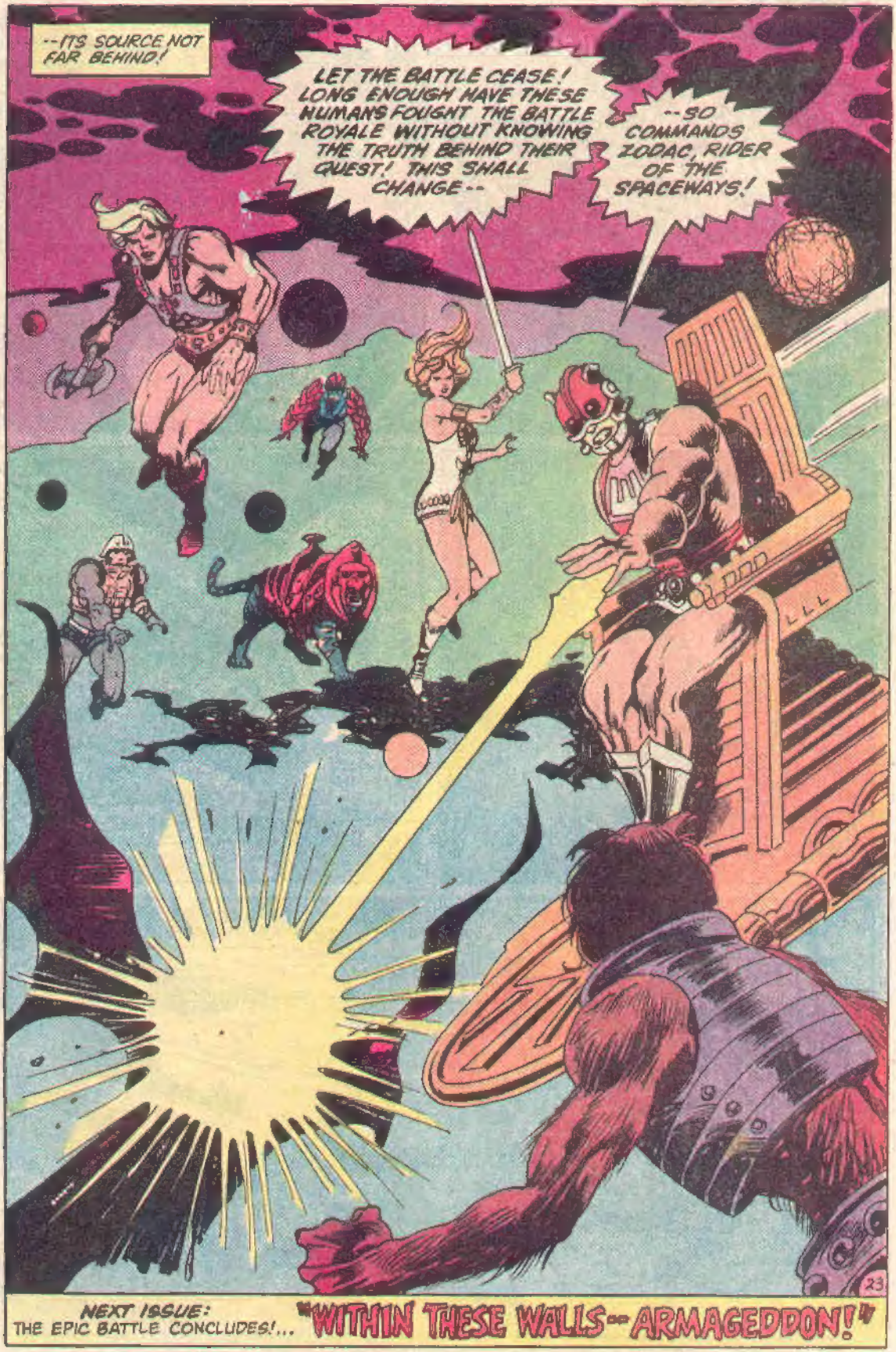
I FAIL TO SEE HOW THE TALISMAN WE HAVE RECOVERED COULD LEAD US HERE, OLD FRIEND?
I DEAL IN SCIENCE, HE-MAN-- I LEAVE MAGIC TO THE DOMAIN OF OTHERS I KNOW ONLY THAT STRATOS LAID HANDS ON THE SIGN OF THE FISH--AND THEN WE WERE ON THIS WORLD.
THEN I SUPPOSE WE ARE TO WAIT FOR THEIR PURPOSE TO BE REVEALED TO US? I KNOW NOT ANY OTHER MANNER WITH WHICH TO SEEK THE POWER SWORD.
AYE. WHY ELSE WOULD SKELETOR HAVE US SEEK THEM OUT?
I DO NOTHING IDLY, FOOL! NATURALLY THESE SIGNS WILL LEAD TO THE TWIN HALVES OF THE POWER SWORD--
--FOR IS NOT THAT AND WORLD DOMINATION WHAT SKELETOR DESIRES?
OR WOULD YOU RATHER FAIL YOUR QUEST, HEROES-- AND SEE THE MUCH LOVED GODDESS SLAIN FOR THAT TRANSGRESSION AGAINST MY WILL?
SKELETOR, YOU DEMON! THE GODDESS HAD BEST BE UNHARMED--
--OR MY AXE WILL DRINK DEEP OF YOUR FOUL BLOOD!.. THIS I SWEAR! SEEK NOT TO INSINUATE YOURSELF AS MASTER OVER US, MONSTER... WE DON'T SERVE YOU. WE NEVER SHALL!
HA HA! BUT YOU DO, FOOL!
18

AH, BUT CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL, CHAMPION, IF THAT WILL SALVAGE THY PRIDE. IN TRUTH, WOULD YOU NOT DO WHATEVER I DID COMMAND IN ORDER TO SAVE YOUR PRECIOUS GODDESS? HA HA HA!
WAIT, HE-MAN! THAT MONSTER'S GOT US OVER A BARREL AND HE KNOWS IT! SAVE YOUR ANGER FOR LATER-- WHEN WE CAN STRIKE OUT AT HIM
YOU ARE RIGHT, TEELA. BUT STILL WOULD I GIVE MY LIFE TO END HIS MISERABLE EXISTENCE RIGHT NOW!
YOU WOULD, WOULD YOU NOT?
THAT MAKES YOU A GREATER FOOL THAN I HAD EVER SUSPECTED, HE-MAN. BUT ENOUGH OF THIS--YOU CAN DO NAUGHT AGAINST MY WILL--
--SAVE GO FORTH INTO THE VOID... AND RETURN NOT UNTIL YOU HAVE THE SWORD IN HAND!
ELSEWHEN.
IT IS WELL. THE HEROES AT LAST MAKE PROGRESS ON THEIR QUEST FOR THE OTHERWORLDLY DEMON.
THUS FAR, SKELETOR HAS DONE MY WORK FOR ME. YET SOON NOW, THE ETERNIAN CHAMPIONS WILL HOLD THE POWER SWORD--
--AND ONLY THEN MIGHT MY ROLE IN THIS BEGIN!
19

MEANWHILE...
HOW MUCH LONGER MUST WE WAIT? DID NOT SKELETOR SAY THAT ONCE WE HELP THESE TALISMANS, OUR WAY WOULD BE POINTED TO THE SWORD?
PATIENCE, MY FRIEND! WE'VE NO CONTROL OVER THESE SYMBOLS AND THEIR MYSTIC PROPERTIES. SOON, I AM SURE WE SHALL...
BY THE POWERS! WE ARE SHAKEN... HURLED ABOUT LIKE CHILDREN'S PLAYTHINGS!
WH-WHAT DOES THIS MEAN, HE-MAN?
NEED YOU ASK, TEELA? THERE ARE EVIL FORCES AFOOT!
AYE, THAT THERE ARE! GRRRR... BE ALERT, HUMANS! I SENSE WE ARE NO LONGER ALONE!
FAR WORSE THAN MERELY THAT, CAT--
--WE ARE ATTACKED!
20


THESE AREN'T ORDINARY FOES, FRIEND! IT'S AS IF SOMEONE'S SUMMONED A NIGHTMARE AND GIVEN IT LIFE! B-BUT... WHO...?!
YOUR OWN WORDS ANSWER THAT, WOMAN... WHAT OTHER MIND HAS THE POWER ... THE INSANITY TO CONJURE SUCH HORRORS? WHO... BUT SKELETOR?
ROOOAR! WHAT DOES IT MATTER WHO SENT THEM, HE-MAN? ALL THAT I CARE IS THEY ARE HERE... QUITE SUSCEPTIBLE TO CLAW AND TOOTH!
THAK!
POINT WELL TAKEN, CAT!
BY THE GODDESS... THEY ARE ENDLESS! FOR EVERY ONE MY WEAPON DESTROYS, TWO MORE COME TO TAKE ITS PLACE!
FAAHTHWOOOSH!
BLAAM!
KWAAM!
THAT ONE... IT FLIES LIKE THE WIND-- EVADING MY EVERY MISSILE AND BLAST!
21
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING


THERE ARE WAYS TO DEAL WITH TROUBLE OTHER THAN YOUR FANCY GADGETS, FATHER! I'VE LONG BEEN A BELIEVER THAT WHERE SUCH SCIENCE FAILS--
--THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A LENGTH OF SHARP STEEL TO SOLVE THE PROBLEM!
ER... IT DOES HAVE ITS ADVANTAGES, DAUGHTER!
BLWAAM!
SKRREEEEEE!
I THOUGHT YOU'D SEE IT MY WAY!
THIS IS INSANITY, MY COMPANIONS! WHAT MANNER OF FORCE WOULD KEEP US SO FROM THE SWORD? EVEN SKELETOR IS NOT SO INSANE AS TO PREVENT THOSE HE SENT AFTER THEM FROM REACHING THEIR LOCATION--
--IS HE?
BEFORE ANY OF THE NOBLE WARRIORS CAN UTTER A REPLY...
...A COSMIC WIND OF SUCH FORCE ARRIVES THAT SWEEPS BOTH DEMONS AND HUMANS ASIDE THROUGH THE BATTLE--
22


--IT'S SOURCE NOT FAR BEHIND!
LET THE BATTLE CEASE! LONG ENOUGH HAVE THESE HUMANS FOUGHT THE BATTLE ROYALE WITHOUT KNOWING THE TRUTH BEHIND THEIR QUEST! THIS SHALL CHANGE--
--SO COMMANDS ZODAC, RIDER OF THE SPACEWAYS!
23
NEXT ISSUE: THE EPIC BATTLE CONCLUDES!... "WITHIN THESE WALLS--ARMAGEDDON!"